DATELINE: NO. 89 ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA JUNE 16, 1976
ALINA ZERANSKI

A PEEK OVER A GARDEN WALL INTO THE PAST
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ON A TOUR OF HISTORIC HOMES AND GARDENS THAT ARE SELDOM OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

NARR: ALEXANDRIA HAS A SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE. JUST ACROSS THE POTOMAC RIVER FROM THE VIBRATING LIFE OF THE CAPITAL OF THE UNITED STATES, THIS OLD VIRGINIA TOWN HAS PRESERVED THE SERENITY OF BYGONE DAYS. ON ITS MAIN ARTERY, TOURISTS STROLL VISITING NUMEROUS GIFT SHOPS AND ART GALLERIES. BUT JUST A BLOCK AWAY, YOU ARE AMONG HOMES AND GARDENS LOOKING AS IF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NEVER ENDED. THEIR OWNERS ARE SIMPLY IN LOVE WITH ALEXANDRIA. THEY JOINED FORCES IN A CITIZENS ASSOCIATION TO RESTORE ITS HISTORICAL TREASURES. THE OLD TOWN WAS ONCE A PROSPEROUS HARBOR, THEN WENT THROUGH A PERIOD OF DECADENCE. DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS, THE OLD HOMES WERE RECLAIMED BY PEOPLE WHO APPRECIATED THEM AND RESTORED THEM TO THEIR ORIGINAL BEAUTY:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- SMITH

"OUR HOUSE IS ONE OF THE OLDER HOMES IN TOWN. THE BACK PORTION OF IT, THE FLOUNDER WING, WAS BUILT IN 1795. AND IT IS INTERESTING THAT IT WAS BUILT BY A RATHER PROMINENT EARLY SETTLER IN ALEXANDRIA WHOSE SON IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS GREAT SUCCESS IN THE CHINA TRADE."

NARR: THAT WAS MRS. WILFRED SMITH, WIFE OF A PROMINENT HISTORIAN, LIVING ON SAINT ASAPH STREET IN ALEXANDRIA. SHE IS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HISTORIC HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR COMMITTEE WHICH PROVIDES UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES TO VISIT SPLENDID PRIVATE HOMES OF THE OLD TOWN. OFTEN PEOPLE STOP BEFORE THE GARDEN WALLS TO PEER THROUGH THE IRON GRILL GATES, BUT THEY MUST WAIT UNTIL SPRING WHEN THE GARDENS ARE AT THEIR BLOOMING BEST TO VISIT THEM -- AND EACH YEAR ONLY A FEW CHOSEN ONES ARE SHOWN. SOMETIMES A THOUSAND VISITORS PASS THROUGH ON A GIVEN DAY. THE OWNERS FEEL AS IF A TRUE INVASION IS DESCENDING ON THEIR HOMES, BUT THIS IS THEIR GARDEN CLUB'S FUND RAISING PROJECT FOR THE RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL LANDMARKS OF ALEXANDRIA, SO THEY THINK IT IS WORTH IT TO HAVE THEIR PRIVACY DISTURBED.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- SMITH

"THE BACK PORTION OF THE HOUSE IS A FLOUNDER. THIS MEANS THAT THERE IS EXPOSURE ONLY ON ONE SIDE WITH THE ROOF SLANTED, SO TO SPEAK, TOWARDS THE GROUND. THE CEILINGS ARE VERY LOW, AND THE WINDOWS ARE SMALLER THAN IN THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE WHICH WAS BUILT AT A LATER TIME WHEN THE FAMILY WAS BEGINNING TO BECOME BETTER ESTABLISHED AND HAD MORE MONEY. THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE WAS BUILT IN THE FEDERAL STYLE ABOUT 1810...(CUT)... IN 1866, THE PROPERTY WAS ADVERTISED AS A BURNED-OUT DWELLING, THE INTERIOR HAVING BURNED. SO ALL THE WOODWORK YOU SEE IS REPRODUCTION WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MANTEL IN THE DRAWING ROOM."

NARR: RED BRICK IS A CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENT IN ALEXANDRIA. IT WAS USED FOR THE HOUSES, GARDEN WALLS AND SIDEWALKS. THE GARDEN BEDS, FILLED WITH BOXWOOD AND FLOWERING SHRUBS, ARE DIVIDED BY BRICK SURFACES PAVED IN GEOMETRIC AND

NARR: (CONT) CIRCULAR DESIGNS. THERE ARE FEW LAWNS, JUST SMALL PATCHES HERE AND THERE. THE SEVERITY OF THE RED WALLS IS BROKEN WITH IMAGINATION BY ESPALIERS OF FORSYTHIA, DWARF FRUIT TREES AND CASCADES OF WISTERIA.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- SMITH

"WE HAVE AZALEAS WHICH ARE IN BLOOM RIGHT NOW. AND OF COURSE NO VIRGINIA GARDEN WILL BE COMPLETE WITHOUT ITS ENGLISH BOXWOOD. THE BOX WE ADORE. THEY HAVE A WONDERFUL FRAGRANCE TO THEM WHICH YOU EITHER LIKE OR DON'T LIKE. WE HAPPEN TO LIKE IT VERY, VERY MUCH. WE ALSO HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH TREE PEONIES... MANY OF THEM WERE BROUGHT OVER BY THE EARLY CHINA TRADERS WHO BROUGHT THEM BACK WITH THEIR GOODS FROM THE FAR EAST. OUR NEIGHBOR HERE ON SOUTH SAINT ASAPH STREET HAS A LARGE PEONY WHICH CAME ON A CLIPPER SHIP IN THE EARLY 1800'S."

NARR: SOME PEOPLE IN ALEXANDRIA LOVE THEIR TREE PEONIES SO MUCH THAT THEY'VE MOVED THEM SEVERAL TIMES AS THE FAMILY CHANGED HOUSES IN TOWN. CAMELLIAS IN ALL POSSIBLE SHADES, FROM THE PALEST BLUSHING PINK TO SPOTTED RUBY, AND EVERGREEN MAGNOLIAS SHADE THE ROOFS AND PORCHES OF THE OLD HOUSES. THE GARDENS ARE LIKE EXTENSIONS OF THE HOMES. BOXWOOD AND SHRUBBERY HEDGES DIVIDE THEM INTO SECTIONS IMITATING ROOMS. USUALLY THERE IS A SPECIAL ENTRANCE SPACE ENCLOSED BY TALL EVERGREENS HIDING FROM INTRUSIVE EYES THE CENTRAL GARDEN WITH ITS FORMAL CIRCULAR ROSE BEDS SUROUNDING A FOUNTAIN, THEN CUTTING AND HERB SECTIONS. LITTLE SCULPTURES OF FAUNS, CUPIDS, SWANS, FROGS OR BIRDS ADORN THESE GARDENS.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- SMITH

"THE RAMSAY HOUSE IS POSSIBLY THE EARLIEST HOUSE THAT WE HAVE IN TOWN... IT WAS ACQUIRED BY THE CITY AND RESTORED, AND FURNISHED BY THE ALEXANDRIA ASSOCIATION...

TAPE: (CONT) IT HAS A VERY, VERY SWEET GARDEN. ALL OF THE EARLY PROPERTIES HAD INTERESTING GARDENS WHICH ATTEMPTED TO INCORPORATE THE KITCHEN SO TO SPEAK WITH ITS HERBS."

NARR: THE DECORATIVE SHADES ON ALEXANDRIA WINDOWS SHOW GREAT RESPECT FOR THE PERIOD DESIGN. THE INTERIORS DIFFER FROM TYPICAL AMERICAN CITY APARTMENTS OR SUBURBAN HOMES. THERE IS NO WALL-TO-WALL CARPETING. THE ORIGINAL WIDE BOARD FLOORING IS COVERED PARTIALLY WITH TRADITIONAL ORIENTAL RUGS. THE FURNIGHING PRESENTS A TASTEFUL COMBINATION OF OLD AMERICAN PIECES AND COLLECTIONS OF ART BROUGHT IN FROM FAR AWAY PLACES VISITED BY THE OWNERS. THIS MAKES THESE ROOMS LOOK LIKE TRUE FAMILY HOMES, NOT JUST MUSEUMS OR SHOW PLACES.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE: ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, YOU HEARD ABOUT THE HOMES AND GARDENS OF OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA. NEXT ---------- ANOTHER DATELINE.

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